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THE SUPPORT OF THE ANTI-ORIENTAL MOVEMENT

BY JOHN P. YOUNG,
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It is occasionally necessary to remind the people of the American Union who live on the eastern side of the Rocky Mountains that they have the bad habit of forming hasty judgments concerning matters with which they are not particularly familiar. They have done so repeatedly in cases in which they might have fairly deferred to the experience of the Far West. A notable instance was the attitude of the East on the subject of Chinese immigration. At first the sentiment of the older section of the Union was averse to any restriction being placed on the importation or immigration of Chinese laborers; but in the end, after extended investigations, Congress decided that expediency and justice demanded that the unassimilable Oriental be excluded.

A brief reference to the agitation which finally resulted in the passage of what is known as the Chinese exclusion act will help the reader to divest himself of the opinion prevalent in the Eastern States that the objection to Oriental immigration is due to the machinations of the labor unions on the Pacific Coast and does not represent the sentiment or wishes of the people at large. This assertion was freely made during the period when exclusion was being discussed by Congress. It was based on assertions made by a small number of interested persons, who believed that the interests of California would be best subserved by maintaining intact the large individual holdings of land which could only be profitably worked by cheap and docile laborers, such as experience had taught them the Chinese would be if they could be brought into the country in sufficiently large numbers, or by the small contingent which thought that a servile class was needed to make life endurable.

So confused was the evidence regarding the desirability of excluding the Chinese that as early as July 27, 1868, Congress passed a joint resolution directing a thorough investigation of the subject. A Congressional committee visited the Pacific Coast and made exhaustive inquiries and subsequently made a report which while in

the main favoring the contention of those urging exclusion did not produce any affirmative legislation until 1879, when Congress passed an act excluding Chinese laborers, which was vetoed by President Hayes.

How largely he was influenced to take this adverse course by the mistaken belief of Eastern people that the opposition to Chinese immigration came wholly from the followers of Dennis Kearney it would be difficult to say, but it is a fact that the opinion was generally entertained at the East that the demand was the result of the Sand Lot agitation, and that there was no unanimity of sentiment in favor of putting up the bars. This belief was fostered by the publication of articles in the Eastern press asserting that the development of California was absolutely dependent upon Chinese labor, and that without an abundant supply of it there would be an end to the progress of the state.

To put an end to this false impression the Legislature of California directed that a test vote should be taken at a general election. In conformity with this resolution, at an election held on September 3, 1879, the voters of California cast their ballots "For" and "Against Chinese Immigration." The result was that in a poll of a little over 162,000 votes, 161,405 were "against" and only 638 "for" Chinese immigration. As the ballot was absolutely secret this overwhelming vote "Against Chinese Immigration" showed that the people of California were practically a unit in favor of exclusion. The evidence was so conclusive that further resistance on the part of the East ceased and in 1882 an act was passed suspending Chinese immigration for ten years. This was subsequently amended, making the exclusion of the Chinese laboring class perpetual.

The recital of these facts ought to warn the Eastern critics of the anti-Japanese immigration movement on this coast that they may be in error in assuming that the attitude of the Pacific Coast on the subject has been inspired by labor agitators, and that the demand for exclusion does not represent the sentiment of all classes in California and of the other states on the Pacific Coast. As a matter of fact, such an assumption is wholly erroneous. The movement did not have its origin in labor circles. As will be shown, the labor leaders had to be taught that they were confronted with a graver menace than that which the Chinese exclusion law averted. They did not take up the matter actively until the legislature had unani-

mously adopted a resolution memorializing Congress on the subject and asking that body to adopt laws to stem the threatened flood of Japanese coolies.

The first warning note came from the San Francisco "Chronicle." On February 23, 1905, that journal began the publication of a series of articles the scope of which was stated in the introduction to the opening paper of the series which was prepared by a writer after an extended inquiry which covered the ground fully, embracing every phase of the question subsequently discussed. These were the words used:

In the accompanying article the "Chronicle" begins a careful and conservative exposition of the problem which is no longer to be ignored—the Japanese question. It has been but slightly touched upon heretofore; now it is pressing upon California and upon the entire United States as heavily and contains as much of a menace as the matter of Chinese immigration ever did, if, indeed, it is not more serious, socially, industrially and from an international standpoint. It demands consideration. This article shows that since 1880, when the census noted a Japanese population in California of only eighty-six, not less than 35,000 of the little brown men have come to the state and remained here. At the present day the number of Japanese in the United States is very conservatively estimated at 100,000. Immigration is increasing steadily, and, as in the case of the Chinese, it is the worst she has that Japan sends to us. The Japanese is no more assimilable than the Chinese and he is not less adaptable in learning quickly how to do the white man's work, and how to get the job for himself by offering his labor for less than a white man can live on.

In entering upon this crusade the "Chronicle" did not do so without deliberation. Nine years earlier the writer of this article had prepared for the "Chronicle" a monograph on the subject of Japanese competition, in gathering data for which he had become deeply impressed with the capabilities of the people of the island empire and took the liberty of presenting their claims to be considered seriously. At that time the people of the East had not overcome the habit of regarding the Japanese in the light in which they were presented in Gilbert and Sullivan's opera of "The Mikado," but to the author the facts presented themselves differently and he remarked:

It would be a gross blunder to class a people as barbarous who had reached such an artistic and industrial development as that attained by the Japanese. It is unwise to underrate the qualities of a competitor. . . . The

Western invader did not find a semi-civilized people in Japan; he merely found a civilization differing from his own, and with the customary contemptuousness of a conquerer he underrated it.

The monograph sketched the progress made in the various industrial arts and the writer unhesitatingly predicted that Japan would become a formidable rival of Western manufacturing nations. It attracted the attention of a United States Senator, who found something in its argument to support a contention he was making at the time and he caused it to be printed as a Senate document. Curiously enough, the chief facts and the predictions concerning the development of the Japanese manufacturing industry were ignored, while a mere side issue, that relating to the advantages possessed by Japan while on a silver basis, was animadverted upon and disputed. At the time Britons and Americans were so engrossed with the idea that the Orient was especially created for them to exploit that they were inclined to treat such predictions as vain imaginings. Since then they have had abundant evidence that the predictions were not unwarranted, for Japan has become a formidable competitor in many fields which Westerners until recently never dreamed would be invaded by the race they assumed to be inferior.

The "Chronicle" never had any illusions on this score. The position of San Francisco in relation to the Orient made its editors observant of the transpacific peoples and qualified them to form a more accurate judgment than that inspired by a desire to exploit, and the arrogant feeling of superiority which make publications like the New York "Independent" reproach Californians with being cowardly because they shrink from the possibilities of a competition with a race fully as capable as our own and having the added advantage of being inured by centuries of self-denial to a mode of life to which we do not wish to conform, even if we had the ability to do so.

When the "Chronicle" on February 23, 1905, sounded its warning, it did so because it believed that an inundation of Japanese would result in a competition as effective domestically as the output of its manufacturing industries is becoming internationally. It did not assume that the laborer was the only person affected. It recognized that the introduction of large numbers of the working classes would result in edging out the white worker, but it perceived that the victory over the latter would pave the way to a complete orientaliza-

tion of the Pacific Coast states and territories. The recognition may be regarded as an admission of inferiority; it has been sneeringly alluded to as a confession of that kind. But sneers do not change facts, and if it is true—and experience teaches us that it is—that the Japanese, by superior virtues or the practice of economies to which we cannot or will not accustom ourselves, can drive us out of business, we would be fools to refuse to take precautions against such a result.

It is necessary to dwell on this phase to show that Pacific Coast antipathy to Japanese immigration is not the result of the fear of workingmen, and that the agitation was not the inspiration of labor unions. It was sound arguments and columns of facts that aroused the people to action. The first publication on the subject, as already stated, appeared on February 23, 1905. On the ensuing 1st of March, the Senate of California, by a unanimous vote, passed the following concurrent resolution:

Resolved, by the Senate, the Assembly concurring, That in view of the facts and the reasons aforesaid (recited in the preamble), and of many others that might be stated, we, as representatives of the people of the State of California, do earnestly and strenuously ask and request, and in so far as it may be proper, demand, for the protection of the people of this state and for the proper safeguarding of their interests, that action be taken without delay, by treaty or otherwise, as may be most expeditious and advantageous, tending to limit within reasonable bounds and diminish to a marked degree the further immigration of Japanese laborers into the United States. That they, our Senators and Representatives in Congress, be and are hereby requested and directed to bring the matters aforesaid to the attention of the President and Department of State.

On the 4th of March the assembly, without a dissenting voice, concurred, and the resolution, as adopted, was sent to Washington. The representatives of California in Congress complied promptly with the demand of the legislature. Up to the date of the adoption of the concurrent resolution by the Senate no labor organization in San Francisco or on the Pacific Coast had expressed itself on the subject. The first intimation that the public had that labor was interested was the passage of the following resolution by the San Francisco Labor Council on the night of March 2d:

Resolved, That we earnestly request the Labor Council to take such steps as it may deem necessary to promote agitation of this question among

the unions of the city and state by resolutions and mass meetings if necessary, for the purpose of strengthening the hands of our representatives in Congress and impressing upon them and all other representatives the necessity of passing adequate laws, and that the agitation be kept up until the object is attained.

There was nothing incendiary in this resolution; it was a matter-of-fact pronouncement made by men who understood the subject, and who acted promptly when their attention was called to the menace. At the time it was made there was no excitement, nor were there any exhibitions of race prejudice. The first mention of a possible objection to the presence of Japanese in the public schools was made in an article published in the "Chronicle" on March 5, 1905, which contained these words: "Precise statistics do not seem to be available, but a careful estimate made some six months ago showed the presence of over 1,000 Japanese pupils in the schools of San Francisco alone." In the same connection attention was called to Article X, Section 1662, of school law of California, which provided for the establishment of an Oriental public school for Japanese, Chinese or Korean children.

On the 5th of May, 1905, two months after the adoption of the concurrent resolution by the legislature, the Board of Education of San Francisco made the following declaration:

Resolved, That the Board of Education is determined in its efforts to effect the establishment of separate schools for Chinese and Japanese pupils, not only for the purpose of relieving the congestion at present prevailing in our schools, but also for the higher end that our children should not be placed in any position where their youthful impressions may be affected by association with pupils of the Mongolian race.

This declaration attracted very little attention at the time. If the Japanese protested against it, the fact was not made public. It is probable that they recognized the justice of some of the arguments urged in favor of segregation, and if they had not been inspired to act otherwise it is reasonably certain nothing would have been heard from them on the subject. At any rate, nothing came of the declaratory resolution, and it might have been completely ignored by the board making it had not the conflagration of 1906 destroyed many of the schools in the city and made it a difficult problem to take care of the white children of San Francisco. It was not until October 11, 1906, that active steps were taken to carry

out the provision of the state law. On that date the Board of Education of San Francisco adopted the following:

Resolved, That in accordance with Article X, Section 1662, of the School Law of California, principals are hereby directed to send all Chinese, Japanese or Corean children to the Oriental Public School, situated on the south side of Clay street, between Powell and Mason streets, on and after Monday, October 15, 1906.

It is doubtful whether this declaration would have incited the Japanese to protest had not the authorities at Washington objected. Immediately after its publication Victor H. Metcalf, then Secretary of the Navy, was sent to the coast to make an investigation, and he made a report to the President, the effect of which was to create the impression at the East that the Japanese on the coast were the objects of continuous persecution. Trifling affairs, which scarcely merited the attention of a police court, were magnified into matters of international importance. The "Chronicle" at the time took occasion to comment on the unfairness of his presentation, and it has since been explained that he was only expected to see one side of the case. In short, ex-President Roosevelt appeared to be seeking for matter upon which to base the most extraordinary attack ever made upon a section of the American Union. In his message to Congress, delivered in December, 1906, he threatened California with an armed invasion if it did not abandon its recalcitrant attitude, and he pictured a condition of affairs as existing here which, had it really existed, would have been shameful; but as it did not, he merely convicted himself of adding another to the long list of his hasty judgments.

It is not the purpose of this article to disprove the assertion that the Japanese in California are the victims of race hatred, or that they are oppressed because they are Japanese. It would be a waste of space to dwell on the subject, for the evidence is overwhelming that in all their ordinary relations with the people they are as well treated as any other foreigners in our midst. Hoodlums make assaults upon other foreigners, but nothing is heard of them, but the Japanese insist upon converting every difficulty in which they become involved into an international affair. During the waiters' strike in this city, Frenchmen, Germans, Italians and other foreigners suffered, but they did not appeal to their governments for redress.

It is only the Japanese who do so, and they make their appeals because they considered themselves as subjects of the Mikado, whom they have been led to believe exercises as much influence on this side of the Pacific as he does in his own empire.

My object is merely to make clear that the anti-Japanese immigration movement in California did not originate in labor circles, although, as is quite natural, the workingmen are a unit in their opposition to the introduction of a non-assimilable race. Despite the impression to the contrary which has been produced by the ill-considered assertions of a few men, the opposition is very general, and there is not the slightest doubt that if a vote on exclusion were taken it would, after a brief campaign of education, be as nearly unanimous as that cast against Chinese immigration in 1879, when less than four-tenths of one per cent of the qualified electors of California voted in favor of continuing the admission of Chinese laborers. The motives that contributed to that result would again operate in the case of the Japanese and in a much more powerful manner, because the people are profoundly convinced that only by their exclusion can the white man's civilization be preserved on the Pacific coast.

But meanwhile we pay the Japanese the compliment of being reasonable beings and not desirous of becoming involved in a conflict with the United States. They have shown this disposition from the beginning, despite the attempts to exaggerate certain political movements into professions of hostility. The people of the Pacific coast understand the situation, and do not seriously regard the war talk so frequently indulged in by Washington correspondents. They believe that President Roosevelt used the alleged grievances of the Japanese as a bogey to secure consideration for his plans for a bigger navy, and while he from the wilds of Africa is sending out warnings and advice to get ready to repel an invasion of Japanese warships the people of San Francisco and of the Pacific coast generally, have been showering courtesies on visiting Japanese ships, fully convinced that pleasant international relations can be maintained with Japan even if we do insist that it is unwise to bring two unassimilable races in close and dangerous contact.